



MONTHLY HIGHLIGHTS

**NOAA
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
NORTHEAST REGION
HABITAT CONSERVATION DIVISION**

November 2002

GLOUCESTER, MA OFFICE, ONE BLACKBURN DRIVE, GLOUCESTER, MA 01930

MAINE DOT SPONSORS FISH PASSAGE WORKSHOP

Maine Department of Transportation sponsored a two day workshop focusing on fish passage needs associated with road crossings and culverts. Many culverts and bridges need replacement and the DOT has recognized the importance of maintaining fish passage within the riparian corridor. However, many more structures built without passage in mind still have a long life expectancy. Creating fish passage at these structures was the focus of the workshop. In contrast to the fish passage training in Waterville Valley, NH the previous month, natural fishways were generally not considered as viable options. In the case studies presented, which were considered typical situations, sufficient land and right of way access required for natural fishways was a limiting factor. Step pools, water control structures, and steep passes, without consideration for habitat value directly associated with the structure, were the primary mechanism for attaining fish passage. (Sean.Mcdermott@noaa.gov, 978/ 281-9113)

HABITAT ECONOMICS PROJECT

Based on direction from Bill Hogarth, the Office of Habitat Conservation is developing an initiative to add socio-economic capabilities to our programs. Earlier this year, Regional Habitat Administrators were asked to identify case studies to test the application of economics theory and valuation approaches. Those ideas were provided to our contractors who sought to address two basic questions: (1) how can NOAA Fisheries improve habitat protection through the use of economic tools, and (2) how do we express the value of habitat losses and the costs to the public in more than biological or ecological terms? Strong cooperation from the Northeast Region resulted in the selection of several case studies from New England and the Mid-Atlantic: OENJ Cherokee Corporation; Golden Anchor Dredge and Dock Project; Fire Island Beach Nourishment; Quonset Davisville Port and Commercial Park; Providence River Federal Navigation Project. The contractors are putting the final touches on their report and planning is underway for a workshop to present this research and analysis to NOAA Fisheries habitat and protected resources staff, other NOAA programs, and possibly outside agencies facing similar issues. We hope to hold the workshop in the spring of 2003. (Kathi.Rodrigues@noaa.gov, 978/ 281-9324)

JAMES J. HOWARD MARINE SCIENCES LABORATORY, HIGHLANDS, NJ 07732

STONE HARBOR UPDATE

Another proposal to dispose of the dredged material that has remained in a confined disposal facility (CDF) at the point in Stone Harbor is now in the process of being presented. Questions had not been resolved regarding contamination levels of the dredged material and the restoration plan for intertidal areas and low beach areas using that material. The new proposal includes testing for contamination according to the prescribed methods and the disposal of the material in uplands adjacent to the beach. Because of the very fine grained sediments that have been identified for 80% of the dredged material, if used, the dredged material probably would need to be capped with clean sand even if the contamination levels are acceptable. This restoration would create scrub-shrub habitat and would be planted with bayberry and other native coastal plant species. Our main concern with this new proposal is the stability of the restoration site and whether future erosion could release contaminated or silty sediments into the marine environment. The Philadelphia Army Corps of Engineers will submit the proposal to Habitat staff for review and comment. (anita.riportella@noaa.gov, 732/ 872-3116)

WINERGY LLC

On November 13, 2002, Habitat staff attended a meeting with representatives of Winergy and state and federal agencies at the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection office to discuss Winergy's proposal and to discuss the necessary requirements for obtaining permits for wind turbine facilities approximately 3 miles offshore of Asbury Park, Five Fathoms Bank (near Atlantic City), and Great Egg Harbor in New Jersey. More than 200 wind turbines would be constructed. A preliminary test tower would be constructed to collect a year's worth of information which would be used for energy generation planning and for the environmental review that is necessary for obtaining permits. Habitat staff stressed the necessity of providing sufficient site-specific information as well as general information regarding the wind turbines so the adverse impacts may be assessed. Among the many issues discussed were the EIS, which should include the essential fish habitat assessment, endangered species review, the need for attention to immediate and cumulative effects, installation issues, fisheries management issues, and shared use issues. (Anita.Riportella@noaa.gov , 732/ 872-3116 and Karen.Greene@noaa.gov , 732/ 872-3023)

MILFORD, CT OFFICE, 212 ROGERS AVENUE, MILFORD, CT 06460

CAUSES OF DAMAGE TO A SHELLFISH BED IDENTIFIED

In the wake of Cross Sound Cable Company's jet insertion of a cable bundle in Long Island Sound, interconnecting sub-stations at New Haven, CT and Shoreham, NY, the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (CTDEP) received a notice of damage from a shellfish bed leasee. The leasee reported that his crop had experienced a sudden die-off and the seafloor had been disrupted in certain parts of the bed. He hired a professional diver to characterize the extent of the problem and obtain GPS fixes on the disruptions and submitted the findings. The suggestion was made that the cable laying vessel either had dragged the cable bundle across or

grounded their vessel on the bed during the installation. The information provided was insufficient to make a clear determination of the cause(s) or the subsequent consequences. Fortunately, the Milford Field office had been communicating with the National Ocean Service SS Rude commanded by LCMD Andrew Beaver. We were discussing the transfer of information regarding the impacts and seafloor recovery rate of utility lines ranging from fiber optic to gas pipelines. Their side scan SONAR equipment and associated data management systems have proven uniquely valuable in generating a variety of visualizations of the installation areas. When approached, LCMD Beaver and his crew expressed a willingness to revisit some of their recently acquired data and array it in such a manner that it might address the shellfish bed issues. The information and transfer were accomplished in early November. The NMFS Habitat Conservation Division (HCD) presented the findings to CTDEP and the bed leasee in mid-month. The SS Rude crew found that a sand wave had migrated onto the bed and was aligned in such a fashion that the shellfish deaths (from burial and suffocation) as well as the unevenness of the seafloor were fully explained. The evidence was sufficient to disprove both the cable dragging and ship grounding options when combined with additional information provided by the US Coast Guard at their New Haven, CT Station. Milford HCD wishes to acknowledge the efforts of LCMD Beaver and the crew of the SS Rude for their kind services. NOAA partnering represent a much needed cooperation for all parties. We expect to complete the utility line investigations with the return of the SS Rude in the spring of 2003. (Michael.Ludwig@NOAA.gov, 203/ 882-6594)

EASTCHESTER PROJECT UPDATE

This natural gas pipeline project between Northport, Long Island and The Bronx is under construction. In particular, progress has been made in the directional drilling portions of the installation and the project generally seems to be on schedule despite recent Nor'Easter events. However, an investigation is underway to determine whether one of the contractor's work barges was responsible for anchor-drag damage that affected existing electric transmission lines between Long Island and Connecticut. HCD staff will be coordinating with the States of New York and Connecticut on the repair or replacement plans to restore the electric transmission capabilities. (Michael.Ludwig@noaa.gov or Diane.Rusanowsky@noaa.gov , 203/ 882-6504)

NATURAL GAS ALTERNATIVE PROPOSED TO SERVE NEW YORK METRO AREA

Tennessee Gas Pipeline, a subsidiary of the El Paso Corporation, is developing a new natural gas transmission project to serve markets in the Northeast. In particular, their proposed Northeast ConneXion Project would expand existing storage and pipeline facilities to provide additional storage capacity, long haul, and storage area transportation service to the New York Metropolitan area and portions of Pennsylvania and New Jersey. A variety of project alignment alternatives are under study by the project proponents. HCD staff have begun preliminary project coordination with some of the involved state and federal agencies with respect to ecological issues related to this upcoming application. (Diane.Rusanowsky@noaa.gov, 203/ 882-6504)

WEST MIDTOWN FERRY TERMINAL

The City of New York proposes to create a central intermodal ferry terminal at Pier 79 on the Hudson River to serve the Midtown Manhattan area. This new facility would replace and expand upon existing ferry facilities at Pier 78. The new terminal would be owned by the City of

New York and would be open to vessels from New York Waterways (an existing operator) and other companies. According to the present proposal, passengers would access ferries from three floating barges, located in the waters adjacent to a new terminal building on Pier 79. The site for the floating barges lies in the same area that was dredged under the Emergency Authorization that followed the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. Habitat Conservation Division staff should be receiving an essential fish habitat assessment from the New York District, Army Corp of Engineers in the coming weeks. (Diane.Rusanowsky@noaa.gov , 203/ 882-6504)

MILLENNIUM PIPELINE UPDATE

The Northeast Region provided Headquarters with comments in response to the Deputy Under Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere's memorandum regarding a Department of Commerce administrative appeal brought by the Millennium Pipeline Company pursuant to the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA). The appeal petitions the Secretary of Commerce for an override of the State of New York's objection to Millennium's proposed natural gas pipeline. The Northeast Regional Office supports New York's objection in this matter and does not believe that Millennium met the procedural and substantive grounds set forth in the CZMA. The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries will issue a letter to NOAA detailing NMFS' comments on the various grounds for appeal claimed by Millennium in early December. (Diane.Rusanowsky@noaa.gov , 203/ 882-6504)